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Message Text

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62
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SNM-02

DEAE-00 JUSE-00 TRSE-00 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01

AID-05 IO-13 OES-06 OMB-01 AGR-05 AGRE-00 /101 W
---------- 111264
P R 032045Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7134
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ECON, ELAB, PDIP, SNAR, CO
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LOPEZ' CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY PROPOSAL CLEARED THE SENATE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE DESPITE PUBLIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE PROPOSAL'S MANAGER. DURING AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ' PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS PRESIDENT LOPEZ DWELT ON THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM AND INDICATED THAT THE USG SHOULDINCREASE ITS NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE. THE GOVERNMENT TOOK FURTHER MEASURES TO MANAGE THE DOLLAR INFLOW. A LABOR DISPUTE INVOLVING SOCIAL SECURITY DOCTORS ANDOTHER EMPLOYEES THREATENED TO DIVIDE THE UTC, COLOMBIA'S LARGEST UNION. END SUMMARY.

2. FALL-OUT FROM CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY PROPOSAL. PRESIDENT LOPEZ' PROPOSAL FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY (CA) CLEARED ITS FIRST HURDLE. THE SENATE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION VOTED
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OVERWHELMINGLY TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL, SENDING IT TO THE

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FLOOR FOR DEBATE. MEANWILE, LOPEZ AND SENATOR JUAN JOSE TURBAY, WHO WAS THE PROPONENT OF THE BILL, CONTINUED TO ENGAGE IN A PUBLIC SPAT (BOGOTA 8747). LOPEZ IMPLIED THAT TURBAY WAS UNDERCUTTING THE PROPOSAL WITH AMENDMENTS AND TURBAY COUNTERED THAT LOPEZ HAD NOT READ THEM AND THAT HE WAS USING "FEMININE LOGIC." TURBAY'S COLLEAGUES, MEMBERS OF THE SO-CALLED FIRST FORCE WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES LOPEZ' STRONGEST SUPPORTERS, NEVERTHELESS RUSHED TO TURBAY'S DEFENSE. IN SPITE OF THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH LOPEZ, THE FIRST FORCE INITIATED CONTACTS AIMED AT UNIFYING OTHER LIBERAL PARTY FACTIONS BEHIND LOPEZ' CA PROPOSAL, MEETING FIRST WITH FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS. THE FIRST FORCE SUGGESTED THE FORMATION OF A CONGRESSIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE, MADE UP OF TWO MEMBERS FROM EACH OF THE THREE FACTIONS, TO GUIDE THE CA THROUGH THE CONGRESS. THEY ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT THE 1978 AND FUTURE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS BE HELD FAR ENOUGH IN ADVANCE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THAT THEY COULD SERVE AS A SORT OF PRIMARY SYSTEM. (THE SEPARATION O ELECTIONS IS PART OF THE CA PROPOSAL.) LLERAS, WHO PREVIOIUSLY PROPOSED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIMARY ELECTIONS, APPEARED SYMPATHETIC TO BOTH INITIATIVES. BY WEEK'S END, THESE TWO GROUPS WERE WAITING TO HEAR FROM THE LEADER OF THE OTHER FACTION, JULIO CESAR TURBAY.

3. AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ PRESENTS CREDENTIALS. AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ ON SEPTEMBER 2. THE AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH LOPEZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO FOCUSED ON THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM. LOPEZ INDICATED THAT THE GOC FELT THAT THE USG SHOULD INCREASE ITS ASSISTANCE TO COLOMBIA IN THE AREA OF NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT. AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ RENEWED USG PLEDGES OF SUPPORT AND COOPERATION AND UNDERLINED THE RECENT SIGNING OF A NEW MAJOR NARCOTICS PROJECT AGREEMENT WITH THE GOC (BOGOTA 8760).

4. NEW ECONOMIC MEASURES. ADDITIONAL MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO MANAGE THE INFLOW OFDOLLARS. PRIOR IMPORT DEPOSITS WERE REINSTITUTED, AND COLOMBIAN BANKS WERE AUTHORIZED TO INCREASE THEIR DEPOSITS IN FOREIGN CURRENCY AND TO INCREASE THEIR FOREIGN CURRENCY LOANS TO IMPORTERS. THE MEASURES ARE DSIGNED TO SPEED UP IMPORT PAYMENTS AND ABSORB MORE PESOS. A FEW MORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PRODUCT CATEGORIES WERE MOVED TO THE FREE IMPORT LIST, AND THE ADMINISTRATION SAYS IT IS BY NO MEANS THROUGH WITH THE LIBERAL-IZATIONS. THE IMPORT MEASURES ARE PRODUCING PREDICTABLE OUTCRYS FROM SPECIAL INTERDST GROUPS. THE METAL WORKING AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES BOTH SPOKE OUT STRONGLY, CALLING THE MEASURES DANGEROUS TO THE ECONOMY. THE ADMINISTRATION MAY NOT BE TOO CONVINCED, ESPECIALLY BY THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY, IN VIEW OF THE 65 PERCENT INCREASE IN TEXTILE EXPORTS THOROUGH MA OF THIS YEAR.

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5. TROUBLE FOR ORGANIZED LABOR. LABOR MINISTER DE CROVO'S CLASSIFICATION THIS WEEK OF DOCTORS OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE (ICSS) ASPUBLIC EMPLOYEES GREATLY RESTRICTS THEIR UNION RIGHTS AND THREATENS TO DIVIDE THE UNION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (UTC). THE ACTION, TAKEN WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE ICSS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, INCLUDING UTC PRESIDENT TULIO CUEVAS, WHO IS ON LEAVE FROM HIS UNION ACTIVITIES WHILE HE ATTENDS TO HIS DUTIES AS A CONGRESSMAN, FORBIDS THE DOCTORS FROM NEGOTIATING COLLCTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS WITH THE INSTITUTION. THE MINISTER TOOK THE ACTION TO PUT A LID ON FUTURE SALARY AND FRINGE BENEFIT INCREASES FOR DOCTORS, WHICH ACCOUNT FOR A LARGE PORTION OF THE ICSS' ANNUAL BUDGET. MOST OTHER EMPLOYEES WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN TRADITIONAL TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES. MOT OF THESE EMPLOYEES BELONG TO UTC AFFILIATES. THE DOCTORS ANDOTHER ICSS UNIONS, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE UTC, HAVE CALLED A NATIONWIDE STRIKE BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 6, TO PROTEST THE MINISTER'S ACTIONS AS ARBITRRY AND AS A THREAT TO TRADE UNION RIGHTS. MEANWHILE, THE UTC EXECUTIVE BOARD, BY A SLIM MAJORITY, HAS SUPPORTED THE MINISTER, IN PART BECAUSE CUEVAS APPROVED OF THE ACTION. UTC SPOKESMEN TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT THE CONFEDERATION IS FACED WITH A REAL PROBLEM. IF IT DOES NOT SUPPORT THE STRIKE ACTION OF ITS MEMBERS, THEY AND OTHER MAY DISAFFILAITE. ON THE OTHERHAND, UTC BOARD MEMBERS ARE RELUCTANT TO DISAVOW CUEVAS. THE SPOKESMAN BELIEVED THE UTC IS IN FOR A ROUGHT NEXT FEW WEEKS.
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